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ABSTRACT

This booklet is intended to help individuals teaching in extension programs understand the special needs of adult learners and use teaching techniques that have proven effective with adult learners. The first group of chapters deals with the importance of self-motivation to adult learning, the importance of taking the time to outline the goals of a course clearly and to determine students' reasons for taking particular courses, the principal distinguishing characteristics of adult learners (perspective, autonomy, and maturity), and teaching methods that are especially appropriate with adult learners. The differences between teaching and learning, the concepts of teachers as agents and students as learners, the importance of setting clear goals and objectives, and the relationship between course content and teaching methods are examined. A series of generalization about adult learners is presented, and the major changes that occur through the adult development cycle are outlined. The four main areas of learning--skills, knowledge, understanding, and attitudes--are described, and the importance of motivation in adult learning is stressed. The next chapter clarifies the relationship among goals, objectives, and outcomes. Learning groups and the roles of teachers and learners in learning groups are discussed. Guidelines for developing the curriculum, selecting course content, and choosing appropriate teaching methods are presented. The next two chapters deal with blocks to learning and anxiety. The final two chapters describe ways in which teachers can evaluate their performance and encourage their adult students to take as active a role in their own learning as possible. (MN)

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TEACHING ADULTS IN EXTENSION

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TEACHING ADULTS IN EXTENSION

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ISBN: 1 870447 00 X

Text by Alan Rogers
Illustrations by Peter Henley and Margaret Melicharova
Printed by Alan Ashworth, Wells, Norfolk

FOREWORD

This booklet is designed to help you to teach adults, whether you are an extension worker in agriculture or health and nutrition or mother and child care or community health or in integrated rural development, or teaching literacy or family planning or workers' education or courses for women or income-generating/vocational programmes or technical subjects in continuing education or some other form of education or training for adults.

For teaching adults is different from teaching children or college students. If you try to teach adults like children, you will usually have little effect and you will sometimes provoke opposition. If you teach them as adults, your work will become more effective and more permanent.

This booklet starts the process of thinking about what is so different about teaching adults. You will be able to add to these points as your experience of teaching adults grows. We hope that you will find this booklet useful.

Education for Development
1987

It is important that you make the material contained in this booklet relevant to your course. So write down here:

- *the subject of your course*
- *the number of student/learners*
- *the time and duration of your course*
- *the place your course is held at*

CHAPTER 1

COMING TOGETHER

Adults choose to come to classes. They are not forced to come, as children are. We may offer them money to come or other inducement, but in the end they are there because they choose to come.

And they come for a reason, to get something; they have their own intentions. If they don't get this, then they are free to stop coming. Which is why so many adults drop out of our classes - they are not getting what **they** want.

We as teachers have something we want to teach. And we expect the adults who come to our classes to want the same thing. But this does not always happen - they often want something different.

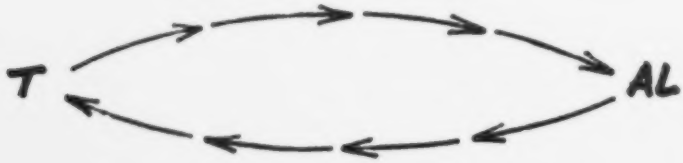
The trouble is that we often fail to do two elementary things which are most necessary when teaching adults:

a) we fail to explain clearly what **we** want to do, what is **our** intention. So the adult learners often are unsure what it is we want to teach to them.

b) we fail to listen to **them** to find out what **they** want. We may want to teach them literacy when they really want to know why they can't have proper housing; or to teach them nutrition when they want to learn how to increase their income; or to teach them about fertilisers when they want to know about prices; or to tell them to have smaller families when they want to know about fishing, and so on.

The result is that we both misunderstand each other. And they are freer than we are - they can stop coming.

T assumes that what he/she is going to teach is what the adult-learners want



AL assume that what the teacher is going to teach is what they want

How should we overcome this?

First, by making quite clear what it is we have to offer. If it is literacy, then we need to tell them what level we are aiming at and how soon we can hope to achieve it, to show them what being able to read means. We should not assume that they know this already - they may have other things in mind when they think about literacy.

Secondly, by listening to them. If we stop talking for a bit and listen, we may be surprised. And if we find them talking about something of great concern to them (smuggling or dacoits or bonded labour or money debts or something else), it may be possible to make this the starting point for our lessons. We ought to start where they are, not where we think they are, to start with what concerns them if we can.

Above all, we should ask them why they have come and what they hope to get out of the classes. In this way, we will soon discover if their expectations and intentions are different from ours.

If we don't do this right from the start, we must not be surprised if they stop coming to our lessons after a time. After all, they are adults, free to choose whether to come or not - and they will "buy" (that is, accept what we give them) only what they want to "buy".

Write out here:

1. What is my course all about? What does it offer to the learners?

2. What do I think the learners have come for?

How can I know if I am right?

CHAPTER 2

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY: AN ADULT?

Adulthood

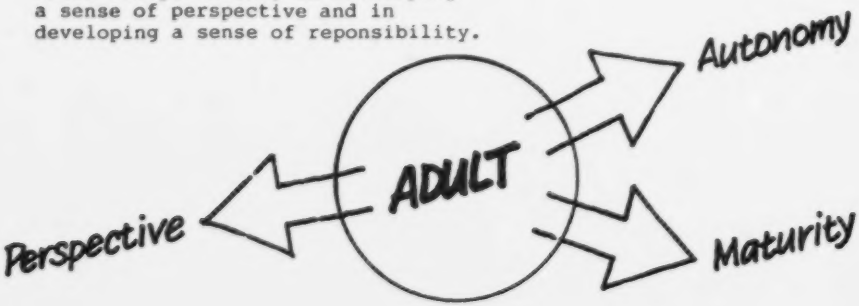
We cannot fix any age for being adult, but in general we think of an adult as having three main characteristics:

a) he or she is more **mature** - that is, more fully developed. But since none of us is ever fully developed, we mean by this that they are using what talents or aptitudes they have already developed. Of course, we shall all continue to grow and develop - but adults have already developed considerable skills and talents.

b) he or she has developed a more **balanced sense of perspective.** A childish person is one who thinks they are either very important and thus needs to be looked after carefully or not at all important - they act like a spoiled child or like a neglected child. An adult is more balanced. Once again, we are all still growing in our sense of perspective but at least we have some idea of where we stand and what we can and cannot do.

c) he or she is **responsible** for their own acts. Sometimes they are responsible for others (children or older parents and relations or handicapped adults etc); but at least they are responsible for themselves. Again we are all growing in this respect. Some of us try to run away from this autonomy or self-responsibility; and for others (especially women) society (and especially men) deny them much opportunity to exercise this responsibility for themselves. But in the end we are all growing into more and more autonomy.

Adults then have not yet fully arrived; but they have achieved a good deal already in developing their own potential, in developing a sense of perspective and in developing a sense of reponsibility.



Teaching for adulthood

The teaching we undertake with adults should encourage this process of developing adulthood:

* we should help them to continue to develop their own talents - not just to develop the talents we want them to have but their own

* we should help them to put everything we teach into a proper perspective from their point of view (not just ours) and encourage them to discuss it and relate it to other topics, not keep it in its own compartment (literacy or nutrition or family planning) separate from the rest of their lives.

* and we should involve them in making decisions about the course - not just tell them what to do but help them to decide for themselves what they want to do

1. How does my teaching help each of the learners to develop their own individual abilities?

2. How does my teaching help the learners to relate the subject matter to the rest of their lives or is it kept separate?

3. How does my teaching encourage the learners to take decisions or do I take all the decisions myself? What decisions have they taken?

CHAPTER 3

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY: EDUCATION?

Education and **learning** are not the same thing.

Learning is more than just memorising, 'learning by heart'; it is making changes in response to demands made upon us and engaging in those changes every time the demands are made.

Learning goes on more or less all the time. We learn from all sorts of experiences and changes. Those who are in our courses are learning even when they are not being taught - learning at home, at work, in their social life and so on. They are learning from their surroundings and will continue to learn for the whole of their lives. (To distinguish this type of learning from what goes on in extension classes, we shall use the term 'student/learners' to talk of those in our classes)

Education is planned learning. It is learning undertaken for a purpose, to achieve something. And that something is set not by the teacher but by the learner. The student/ learner wants to achieve something, so he or she comes to a course to learn in order to achieve that goal.

Education then involves four things -

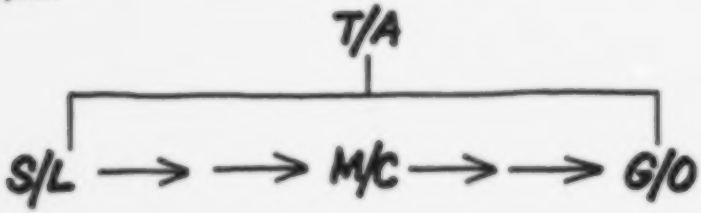
* a teacher (or 'agent') who plans the course and helps the learner to learn (T/A)

* a learner who undertakes the course and does the learning (S/L)

* a goal or objective, the purpose of the course (G/O)

* the material of the course, made up of the contents and the methods (M/C)

The relationship between these parts can be seen in this diagram:



In education

the teacher/agent: the teacher and the organiser, the person or body who has arranged the course, as well as the person who teaches it, are both part of the 'agent'; they plan the course and the lessons and help the student-learner to learn.

the student/learner: the learner undertakes a journey towards the goal. The teacher/ agent shows the path to follow but the learner does the work of learning.

the goal/objective: the target is set by the learner; or it is set by the teacher/agent and accepted by the learner. It is what the learner strives to become.

method/content: this is the programme of work which the teacher/agent plans for the student/learners and which, if the learners complete it, will lead towards the goal.

Our attitudes towards our teaching will influence everything we do. We can be **teacher-centred** in our approach, concentrating on instructing our student/learners, believing that what we the teachers do is the most important thing. We can be **subject-centred**, concentrating on what we teach, believing that what we teach is the most important thing. Or we can be **learner-centred**, concentrating on our students, believing that their needs, their wishes and intentions, and their learning are more important than anything else. We have to decide for ourselves where we stand.

When planning my course, do I start with:

a) what I (the teacher) will do?

b) the subject matter to be taught?

c) what the student/learners can and will do?

The purpose of education

For some of us, the purpose of education is to 'bring the learners in', to show them how to do something, to teach them the right way to go about a task, the correct knowledge - to make the learners like the teacher.

For others of us, the purpose of education is to 'send the learners out', to help them to think for themselves, to be free to make up their own minds while living in the world, to decide between many choices - even when they disagree with us.

The first view of education sees it as leading to conformism either to what already exists or to an ideal; it tends to reproduce and confirm the existing system; the second view sees education as leading to independence for the learner, to liberation and the transformation of society. The first sees education in terms of the learners 'coming in' to school or college or in some other way; the second sees education in terms of the learners 'going out' into the world of their own lives.

What do I see as the purpose of my teaching:

- *that the student/learners will learn what I want them to learn, to do what I want them to do?*
- *that the student/learners will be free to do and to think what they want to do and think?*

Some people have distinguished between these two views by calling the first **'training'** and the second **'education'**.

Probably all our teaching should have something of both elements in it - we may show our learners the 'right way' (as we see it) to do something, the 'correct' knowledge' but equally we must respect their freedom and indeed encourage them when they disagree with us and prefer to do things their own way, to think for themselves.

Indoctrination is not however part of education at all. It teaches the learners the 'right' way to think; it denies them any choice at all.

What parts of my course consist of 'training', showing the student/learners the 'right' way to do things, the 'right' knowledge and attitudes?

What parts of my course give the learners freedom to decide for themselves how to do things, what to learn, what views to hold?

CHAPTER 4

OUR ADULT STUDENT/LEARNERS

We all draw in our minds a picture of who our student/learners are; but we do not always test whether we are right or wrong in this picture. Try this simple test:

What do I think my student/learners are like in terms of

ages

male-female ratio

educational level

occupations

income levels (approx)

interest levels

willing to work

intelligent

knowledge of the subject

Now test out your presuppositions by talking to your group of student/learners about themselves. If you get more than half the answers correct, you are doing well.

The adult learner

The adult learner is different from the school-child and from the college student; so our teaching must be different. We need to look at some of these differences.

There are many ways in which the adult learner is different from the younger person. The list which comes below gives some of these ways, but you can work out others from your own experience.

But before we make our list, the first thing we must remember about the adults that we teach is that they are all different from each other. The range of ability, of experience, of willingness to learn and so on will be much wider in an adult learning group than in a school or college class. So that all the generalisations we can make about our adult student/learners must include a wide range of differences.

Nevertheless, we can make some generalisations:

1. Our student/learners are adult by definition. Most of them will be seeking for more control over their lives, not less; many will resent being told all the time what to do. Thus our teaching should encourage our learners to be responsible, not deny to them decision-making about the course.

Can I identify any decision about the work of my course that the learners rather than the teacher made?

2. Our adult learners are still growing. Because they are adults, they have not stopped developing [see the next chapter on the adult life cycle]. Our teaching is part of the growth pattern of each individual in our classes; it is part of their life and relates to what has gone before and what comes after.

Can I see any ways in which the learners in my class have grown in skills, knowledge or understanding during the course?

3. Our adult learners bring with them a package of experience, knowledge, skills, understandings. They do not arrive in our classes ignorant and unskilled; they have learned from life itself and this learning is important to them. Our teaching must not ignore this previous learning but take it seriously. Not all of this previous learning is wrong, a hindrance to the new learning we are trying to bring about; and much of it will be new to us. We can learn much from our student/learners when we teach adults.

Can I see any occasion when I was able to use the experience of the learners to help on the work of the class, when they told me something I didn't know?

4. Our adult learners <u>come with</u> particular <u>intentions</u> [see chapter 1 above]. Sometimes these are very clear to the learner, sometimes they are vague. Sometimes the real reason is not the reason they will give to us. Some want to do something quite specific. Some want to join a group to feel good. Some are genuinely interested in the subject of our course. We need to try to understand these different intentions and to help all our learners to fulfil what they come to our classes for.

Can I list some of the intentions of the learners in my class?

5. Our adult learners <u>come</u> to our classes <u>with</u> <u>expectations</u> as to how they will be treated; even those who have never been in school think they know what school will be like. Some will expect to be treated like children, others will expect to be treated differently. Above all, some learners in our classes will feel confident, able to cope; others will expect to fail, to feel silly. Our teaching must treat each of the student/learners differently according to their expectations; we cannot treat them all the same.

How many of my student/learners expect to be treated as adults, how many as children?

6. Our adult learners, having learned much from life itself, will each have their own pattern of learning; each will have developed their own strategies. Some will learn faster than others, and all will learn faster in some areas of our subject (usually those areas which relate to their own experience, for instance) than in other areas. Most of them will tend to rely less on memory than children do; they learn best when they can see meanings and relationships and see things as a whole. Our teaching should take account of these different learning styles by presenting our material in several different ways, not just in one way.

How many seem to be fast learners, how many slow learners?

7. Our adult learners will have competing interests. For them, our course will be secondary to their job, their family, their home, their social life. Our student/learners come from a complete social background, and our teaching must relate to that background, not cut them off from it. Some part of that background will help the new learning, some parts will hinder it. We need to help the learners to identify the helps and to overcome the hindrances.

Can I list some of the other concerns that my student/learners have?

Now try this simple test:

Assumption	*Test*
My student/learners cannot make decisions about the course	*: yes/no*
My student/learners have stopped growing	*:yes/no*
My student learners know nothing about the subject matter unless I tell them	*: yes/no*
All my student/learners are interested in the subject	*: yes/no*
My student/learners expect to be treated like children	*:yes/no*
My student/learners are reluctant learners	*:yes/no*
My student/learners' other concerns and interests are not relevant to the course	*:yes/no*

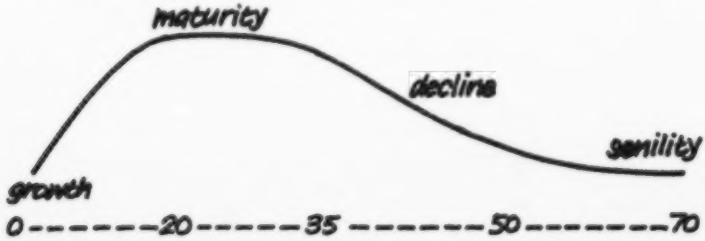
Record your answers and then re-read this chapter and see if you wish to change anything.

CHAPTER 5

THE CHANGING ADULT

We are very familiar now with the way children grow through infancy, childhood and adolescence to early adulthood; but how do adults continue to grow?

1. Some people see human life in three stages - a period of growth (to about 21 or 25 years), followed by a stable period of no growth, then a period of decline:



But others, although they recognise some signs of physical deterioration in some adults as they grow older, suggest that there is no decline in mental abilities but continued growth.

2. Some people see adulthood as a period of changing concerns. At first, the adult is most concerned with his/her job; later comes the family; then come social interests, neighbours and friends.

Or some see the young adult as looking more to his/her future, whereas the more mature adult is concerned with the 'now', and the older adult with the past.

3. Some people see adult life as involving a sequence of crises points or new roles -

- a new job or unemployment
- building up a home
- marriage, parenthood
- moving house
- children leaving home
- the death of parents
- the death of partners and peers

and so on.

It is clear that there is as yet no agreement about the development of adults.

It is also clear that not all adults will have the same pattern of change. Men and women will usually have different life-cycles. So will those in different classes/castes/cultures and occupations. A woman in paid employment will have a different growth pattern from a woman in the home. Education, income, class expectations and other factors will all affect the pattern of change throughout adulthood.

But we as teachers need to remember

* that our student/learners will be changing, not static

* that they will have different concerns from us, and from each other

* that they will have different time perspectives - that is, some of them will be more forward looking (and thus willing to wait for the results of their learning) than others who will be more impatient to apply their new skills, knowledge and understanding immediately

* that they will each be facing different crises points and role adjustments

We must try to understand and share their concerns.

Can I list some of the members of my class who are going through some crisis at the moment?

Have I been able to help them while they are learning?

CHAPTER 6

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY: LEARNING?

There are many theories about how learning takes place, and we do not need to explore them all in detail here. But because some of them will affect our teaching, we should know something about them.

There are four main areas of learning:
We learn (i.e. change) in our **skills**, what we can do
We learn (i.e. change) in our **knowledge**, adding to or changing what we know
We learn (i.e. change) in our **understanding**, how we 'see' things
We learn (i.e. change) in our **attitudes**, what we 'feel' about things
All of these lead in the end to changes in the way we behave, what we do.

Our teaching should lead to changes in all of these areas, not just one. If we are teaching health or nutrition or agriculture or family planning or literacy or income-generating programmes etc, we should encourage the learners
- to develop new skills
- to add to their knowledge
- to develop new understandings
- to adapt their attitudes

and we should look for the results of these learning changes in their behaviour.

Can I:

list one new skill learned in my class

list one new piece of knowledge learned in my class

list one new understanding learned in my class

list one new attitude learned in my class

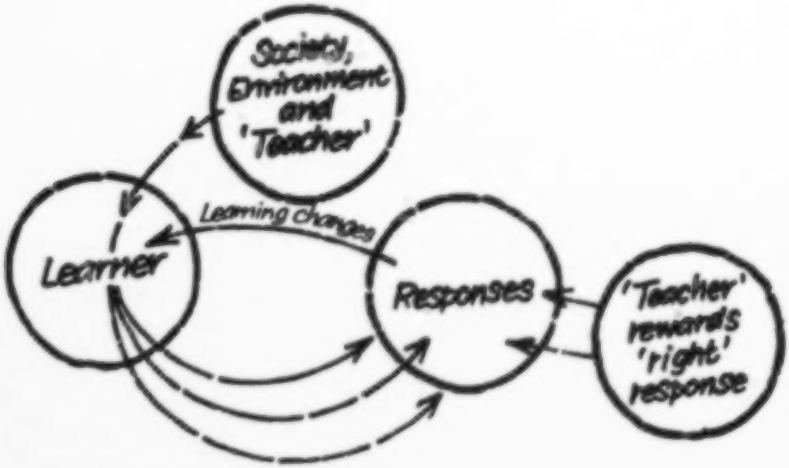
list one new behaviour learned in my class

Learning theories:

There are two main groups of theories (sometimes called the 'push' and 'pull' theories) about how learning takes place.

a) The first says that the learners receive a stimulus from outside of themselves; that they respond to this stimulus, and that the 'right' response is reinforced from outside. The initiative for learning comes from outside the learner; and if we as teachers wish to direct this learning process, we should -

* give the 'right' stimulus
* reward (reinforce) the 'right' response



b) The second group of theories says that the initiative comes from within the learners - that their needs or wants, their drives and urges, their involvement with the world they live in, all lead them to engage in making learning changes. There are many different learning theories here but they all have one thing in common: the learners are not the passive responders to stimuli but are active in shaping their learning.

The first group of theories stresses the activity of the teacher in learning; the second group stresses the activity of the learner in learning. There seems to be some truth in both sets of theories.

From our point of view, the most important conclusions from these studies seem to be the following:

1. that the impulse for learning comes from within the learner; and that the learner - and only the learner, not the teacher - can make the necessary learning changes. We can never force any learner to learn; they must do it voluntarily [see Motivation below]. Our role is not to 'teach' but to help the student/learners to make their own learning changes.

2. that existing experience is the most important factor in learning. All our adult learners already know much that is relevant to what we wish them to learn; we must try to find out what they already know.

There are different types of knowledge, each of which may be 'true' in different circumstances. There is practical knowledge which comes from experience of the world, doing a task. There is technical knowledge, the application of knowledge to solve problems. There is theoretical knowledge, 'book' knowledge, the subject of academic study. There is 'interpersonal' knowledge, the way we value the knowledge of others. There is self-knowledge, the way we use knowledge for our own growth. And so on. To take a few examples: a chemist knows a diamond as a carbon crystal, a glass-cutter as a tool, a merchant as an investment, a geologist as a rock formation, an artist as a thing of beauty, a jeweller as an adornment, a ring wearer as an emblem with emotional attachment. All these forms of knowledge are true and none is 'better' than another. A scientist knows the formula to mix soil and water; the farmer knows another mix, the brick-maker knows another, and the child who plays with mud knows how to mix these two substances to build castles or dam streams. The knowledge of law of the legal lecturer is different from but not more true than the knowledge of the courtroom lawyer or the knowledge of the police, the social worker or the citizen caught up in some suit. There is no one true form of knowledge; it is all based on experience. The same is true of what we teach - the knowledge we bring to the task of teaching is limited to our own experience, and those who come to our classes possess a whole range of knowledge we can never possess.

Most of our teaching is based on academic knowledge, book knowledge; but it should always relate to practical and technical and lead on to other forms of knowledge. We as teachers should not undervalue the knowledge which our adult student/learners possess but must share our type of knowledge them while at the same time learning from them.

CHAPTER 7

MOTIVATION

We are often asked in extension, "How do I motivate my student/learners to learn?"

This assumes that the learners are reluctant learners, that although they are in our classes, they do not want to learn. So the first question we need to ask ourselves (and them) is, why are they in the class at all? If they are adults and they don't want to learn, they are free to leave. So perhaps they are there for some other reason, perhaps to learn something different from what we are teaching them.

Motivation is the desire to do something - in this case to learn. It can depend on what we call either **extrinsic** factors (that is, things outside the learner like examinations, regulations, punishments or prizes) or on **intrinsic** factors (that is, attitudes within the learner, a desire to learn). Motivation which depends on external factors (the 'stick' or the 'carrot') does not last long; what is needed is to help the learner to <u>want</u> to do the learning.

Some inner motivation comes from a sense of need. Some needs are basic - food, shelter, safety, love and belonging, and esteem from others; only if these are met will other learning needs be felt. But it is clear that some people feel these needs more strongly than others.

Sometimes motivation can be learned - that is, our past experience has encouraged us to progress further in some directions than in others. In those areas where we have been 'successful, we are more motivated to continue to learn than in those areas where we have been called 'failures'. Motivation grows with success.

But the most important factor making for motivation is a sense of purpose, our awareness of a goal to be achieved, a task to be performed. The nearer the goal, the stronger the motivation. If motivation is weak, it may be because the goal is felt to be too far away. The results of the learning are too delayed for the learner to feel excited, to feel that all the effort is worthwhile.

Within every learning situation (a class or course), there are factors which encourage motivation or discourage it. Those which encourage motivation are the things which make the learners 'feel good' about the learning - a sense of achievement, recognition, responsibility and the like. But these do not last very long and constantly need to be renewed, There are also other factors which make the learners 'feel bad' about the learning - bad teaching styles, bad relations with the teacher or with other learners, bad working conditions - and these tend to last a long time. Our aim as teachers is always to make the learner 'feel good' - to remove the bad factors and strengthen the good factors.

The most important factor in motivating student/learners is the attitude of the teacher. If we believe the learners are lazy, unintelligent, reluctant and unable to learn and that we must force them to learn, then our students will not be motivated to learn. If we believe - and let the learners know that we believe - that they are keen to learn, able and intelligent, and that the things which are stopping them from learning lie outside of themselves, not in their personality, then they will be motivated to learn.

Underline the words which most clearly describe your student/learners:

able/ignorant/slow/bright/keen/aware/lazy/thick/quick/ dull/unintelligent/sharp/responsible/work-shy/unwilling/ irresponsible/ of low ability/interested/imaginative/ bored/willing/unimaginative/uninterested

add some of your own:

If you have underlined the following, you should have no trouble with motivation:

<u>able, bright, keen, aware, quick, sharp, responsible, interested, imaginative, willing</u>

If you have underlined a large number of negative words, you should rethink your attitude towards the learners. Are they really as bad as all that? If so, then perhaps you should think about giving up teaching because you are probably the person who is stopping the student/learners from learning. As teachers, we need to develop positive attitudes towards the learners.

List some of the goals you have set for your learners: how far away are they (in time)?

Goal	*How far away?*

Short-term goals will motivate the learners more than long-term goals

CHAPTER 8

GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES

All teachers set goals for their student/learners. A goal is the purpose for which the course is intended: it may be a particular level of literacy or better farming practice or better health attitudes or smaller families or some income-generating skill or something else.

The goal which lies at the end of the course is usually called the objective; the other goals which lie at points along the course are usually called goals.

The goals and objectives are the planned outcomes (results) of the learning programme - what we hope the learners will be able to do at the end of each stage of the course.

But equally the learners set goals and objectives for themselves. These are the outcomes of the course which the learners want to happen. These are often - but by no means always - the same as those of the teacher. They are more powerful than the goals and objectives of the teacher.

Thirdly there are the real outcomes of the course. Sometimes these are the same as the goals and objectives of the teacher and the same as the goals and objectives of the learners; but more often they are not. Often there are some unexpected results from our teaching; and some of the outcomes do not come about until a long time after we have finished our teaching.

So there are three sets of outcomes:

a) the planned outcomes (results) of the teacher: the purpose of your course.
b) the intended outcomes (results) of the learners: what they want to achieve.
c) the real outcomes (results) of the course: what is in fact achieved - both in the short-term
and in the long-term

The relationship may be represented like this:

It is important that we set out the goal and objectives of our courses very clearly. If we do this, the learners will not be confused what they are supposed to do; they will be clear about the task and they will be able to decide whether it is what they want to do. What is more, the teacher can choose the best teaching methods and materials if the goal are clear. And both the teacher and the learner can determine whether they are achieving anything or not. But if the goals are vague, none of this will be possible.

The goal is best expressed in a 'doing' word: "at the end of this programme, the learner should be able to do ..." It is not enough to say that the learner should "know" or "understand", because we need to be able to <u>see</u> that the learner knows or understands; and we can only see this when the learners do something like answer some questions, read a text, make an item, engage in some activity and so on. The results of family planning and literacy programmes can often be seen clearly but community health programmes are usually based upon vaguer objectives; they too should be set out in terms of behavioral objectives, something which the learners can do.

What is more, we need to specify -

* the level at which we expect the task to be performed
* the conditions under which we expect the task to be performed

For example, in a literacy class, it is not enough to say that the objective is that the learners will be able to read. To read what? And how well? It is best to say that the objective is for the learners to be able to read a simple text chosen by the teacher (or better still by the learners for themselves) and read out aloud in class. In a health programme, the objective is not just for the learners to understand about health matters but in their everyday lives to use a balanced diet and to take a series of simple steps to avoid the possibility of disease - things which we can all see. The same is true of community development: the objective is not simply 'awareness', because we cannot see this. Awareness needs to be expressed in deeds - for example, discussion or actions to help the local community or teaching others.

Of course, it is true that the main goals must always be those inner learning changes - knowing, understanding and attitudes - which we call 'private' learning; but we need to be able to see these expressed in 'public' actions if we are to know that our objectives are being achieved.

While it is easier to teach very specific and narrow objectives (to be able to make a piece of furniture or to grow a particular crop variety, for example), from an educational point of view it is more satisfactory to widen the goals and objectives as far as possible (for example, to include other items of furniture or more general approaches to agriculture). We do not want our student/learners to be limited just to what they have learned in our course; we want them to be free, to be able to carry on learning, experimenting, making or doing new things after the end of our course.

What are the objectives of your course? Express them as
a) 'private' learning changes:

b) 'public' learning changes:

CHAPTER 9

THE LEARNING GROUP

Learning is individual: each learner learns for himself or herself. But most teaching is done in groups (classes). This sometimes poses a problem: the teacher has to pay attention to the group as a whole and, at the same time, to the different needs and development of each of the learners. In school or college, this is not too difficult since all the learners are about the same age and often do not differ in learning abilities very greatly. But with adults it is more difficult: some are very confident, others are anxious; some are able, well educated and fast learners, others are slower, less experienced and find greater difficulty in learning.

But in fact there are several helps with this problem. First, there are signs that adults prefer to learn in groups; they like company in a difficult task. After all, we all live in groups and move from group to group - from family and village to school, to work groups and leisure groups, to new family groups and so on. So to learn in a group is a natural process. Secondly, the group itself can help the teacher to keep an eye on all the individual learners; in an adult class, there are many teachers, not just one.

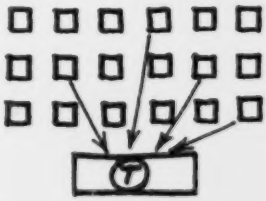
There are two main aspects to a learning group: the class itself, concentrating on the task, with the teacher as its leader and with all the members playing their part in the learning; and secondly, a social grouping which forms (often with a different leader) when the class relaxes for a time from the learning task. This second aspect is most important and will help on the learning: so do not discourage your class from talking amongst themselves, from engaging in other forms of activity than just the learning. Do not feel they are "wasting time".

For a group of adult learners who feel comfortable with each other will help each other to learn. The confident ones can help the more diffident. The group provides support and encouragement to the learners to experiment and to practice; the group will challenge each of its members to do new things. This is particularly true of learning new attitudes - the group will accomplish much that the teacher alone cannot do. And the group has a life of its own which pushes each student/learner along, urging them to new efforts.

Some of the learners may find a group (class) something of a threat, and we need to do what we can to help these people. The group must not become restrictive on the learner or push anyone along too fast. It is our job as teacher to protect some learners from the pressures exerted by the more vociferous members of the group.

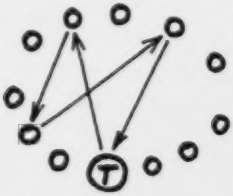
We can of course teach our class as just a set of individuals, not as a group; but if we do that we lose the value of the learning group. It would be a good thing if we can help the group to form itself.

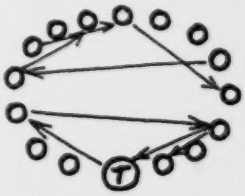
Seating patterns will help this. If we have a formal arrangement, like this:



then the members of the group (class) cannot see or talk to each other; they can only talk to or listen to the teacher. Such a class is unlikely to become a group.

Sitting in a circle like this





means that all members can see, talk to and listen to each other - even when each of them is engaged on their own particular task.

But remember that sub-groups can sometimes form amongst those far removed from the teacher:

There will be times when the teacher will wish to break the class into smaller groups - to do a particular task, to discuss, to teach each other, to solve a problem and so on. This is a most useful tool for the learning process: but do not always use the same small groups. Break them up in different groups so that small cliques do not form in your class. But this is the easiest way, in a large class, in which you can get all the members to be active in their own learning.

Draw a plan of your class and see how many of the learners can see and talk to other learners. How many always sit in the same place?

How far is your class a group? - that is, do its members discuss among themselves? Does it work when you are not teaching it as a whole?

CHAPTER 10

ROLES IN THE LEARNING GROUP: LEARNERS AND TEACHER

All of our student/learners will adopt roles within the group we teach. Some may be always asking questions, some may be always silent. Some may see themselves as helpers to the teacher, some may be making jokes all the time. Some will know all about the subject right from the start; others will believe they know nothing and cannot learn and therefore they won't try to learn.

If the learners are to learn (that is, to change their skills, knowledge, understanding and attitudes), then they must change their roles from time to time. The silent ones need to talk, the talkers should listen; the helper of the teacher must take a back seat, the joker must be serious for a time. The class member who knows everything needs to admit "I don't know", and those who think they know nothing come to realise that they do know something and can do more.

All of this is the role of the teacher/instructor/trainer/extension worker (or what you will), to help the class members to change their roles. As teacher we have many roles to play:

a) we are the **group leader** - we set the task to be done and make sure that the whole group works on it

b) we are the **teacher** - that is, we plan the course and organise it; and we guide the learners, provide information and instructions what to do

c) we are a **member of the group** - we can share with our student/learners their experiences and we can show them how to learn

d) and we are the **judge** - that is, we are the 'audience' before whom the learners will perform. They will do their tasks before us, asking us to assess whether they are doing them well or not.

Teaching styles

How we mix all these roles will vary for each one of us. We all have our own teaching style.

Some of us are autocratic: we issue commands and expect to be obeyed; we 'tell' the learners what to do and what they should know. These have sometimes been called 'the lion-tamers' - they discipline the unruly learner into a well-behaved person.

Some of us are more free in our relations with the learners; we 'invite' them to do something; we persuade them rather than order them; we lay on a performance to win them over. These teachers have sometimes been called 'the entertainers' - they try to keep the learners interested by showing off.

And some of us are more democratic; we 'consult' the learners as to what they want to do; we join the group and discuss on an equality with the learners, encouraging them to air their views and believing that these views are as important as our own. These teachers have sometimes been called the 'the cultivators' - they set out to encourage the learners to grow independently of the teacher.

What is my own teaching style?

liontamer
entertainer
cultivator

Class Climate

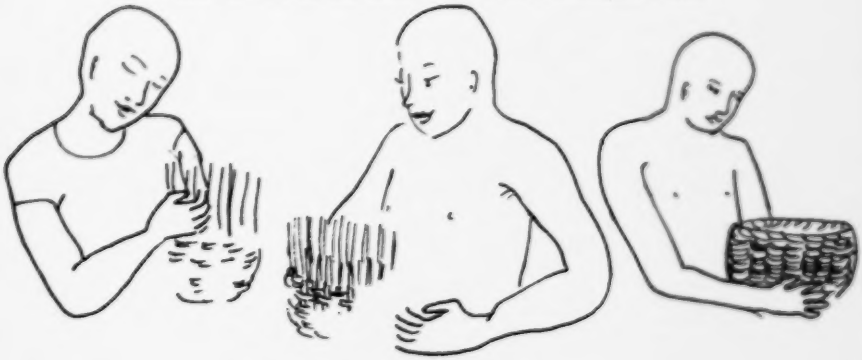
The style we adopt will in turn influence the atmosphere in our class. Again, we can classify this.

Our classes can be:

warm, friendly, relaxed, encouraging	OR	cold, unfriendly, tense, discouraging
direct, controlled by the teacher; the teacher tells the learners what to do, gives them no freedom	OR	indirect, the learner engages with the subject matter more than with the teacher
enthusiastic, interested, keen, committed	OR	uninterested, apathetic, dull, uncommitted
disorganised, lacking in structure, inefficient, vague	OR	well organised, precise, clearly laid out, efficient

Which words characterise my class?

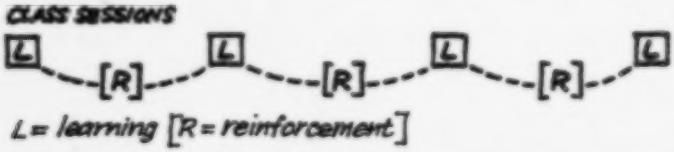
warm/cold
direct/indirect
enthusiastic/apathetic
disorganised/organised



Learning and the class

There is one other aspect of teaching which will affect all that we do, and that is our attitude to how the student/learners learn.

1. If we believe that our student/learners learn from us, then we will want to teach them everything; we will tend to believe that they only learn in class, that without the teacher they cannot learn. Learning only takes place when we are there:



The time between classes is a waste of time or not relevant to the learning - or at best a time when the learners 'learn by heart' what we have taught them.

This is the view of those teachers who see the learners as ignorant, 'empty pots' to be filled up by the teacher.

2. If we believe that our student/learners can learn by themselves, then we will tend to set them tasks to do and leave them to do these tasks; we will believe that they can learn outside the classroom, that learning goes on when the teacher is not present:

The time between classes then becomes the real learning time, not the class itself. What we do in class is to test whether the learning is done well and to set the next task, showing the learners how to do it but leaving them free to do it for themselves.

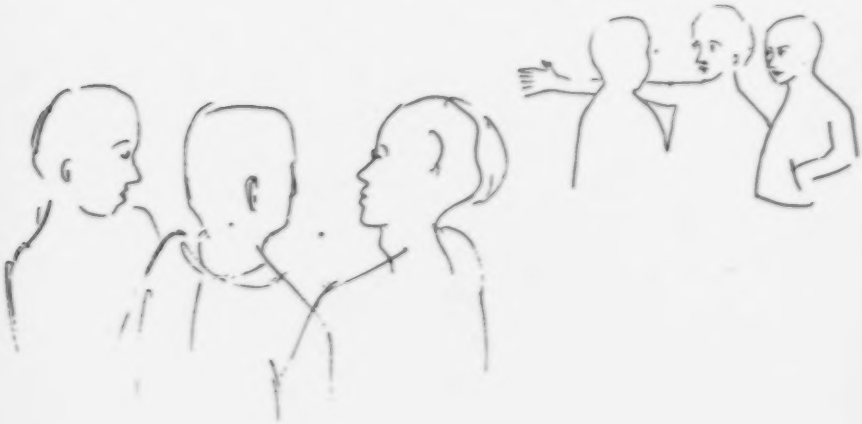
This is the view of those teachers who see the learners as plants who can grow - and who grow all the time, not just in class - if they receive the right food.

Do I believe my student/learners can learn
only in class?
out of class?

What tasks do I ask my student/learners to do out of class?

The role of the teacher then is two-fold:

- to keep the group (class) together so that all the student/learners can help each other to learn
- to set the learning tasks and test (evaluate) whether the learning is well done.



CHAPTER 11

SETTING THE CURRICULUM

The teacher sets the curriculum.

Some of us may find that surprising because we have been given a course outline to teach to. But the curriculum is more than the list of topics to be covered in the course: it is all the 'events' which the teacher plans for the learners and the order they come in. It is all the experiences which the learners have while learning.

1. There is the experience of the context of the course:

a) the setting - that is, the classroom or other place we teach in, whether it is easy to reach or not, whether it is too hot or too cold, too dark or very light, whether there are distractions or not, how we arrange the seating and so on. All this will teach the learners a good deal about what we, the teachers, believe and want from the learners.

b) and the climate of the class - whether (as we have seen) it is warm, welcoming, enthusiastic, direct, well-organised or not; whether the teacher is really interested in the learners or not.

2. Then there is the experience of the contents of the course. Once again there are two aspects to this:

a) the topics themselves and the order in which we teach them. It is not necessary to teach everything in the course book to every group, nor to put them always in the same order; indeed the needs of some adult groups will mean that some topics may need to come earlier than others and that some can be omitted altogether. It all depends on the needs of the group.

b) the pace of the class, the speed with which we cover the topics. Once again we need to vary this with each adult group we meet. It may be necessary to spend longer on some topics with one group than with another. Our decisions about this will depend on whether we are more concerned with what and how much the learners learn than with how they learn. If we are more concerned with what the learners learn, then we will force the pace, we will tend to go too fast for some of the learners, we will try to cover all the set subject matter, whether the learners are learning or not. We can test this for ourselves: if we answer to some question which one of the learners has asked with the words, "I can't deal with that question now: I must get on", then we are almost certainly going too fast. Indeed, we often assume that the learners can go as fast as we (the teachers) can, but this is not of course always true.

If on the other hand we are more interested in how the learners learn, so that they can continue to learn when the course is over, we will try to go at their pace, to deal with their questions, knowing that what we do not cover in class they can learn from other sources after the end of the class.

The difference between these two approaches is called either 'content-oriented', that is, more concerned with what the learners learn, and 'process-oriented', that is, more concerned with how they learn. The decision we make on this will determine what subjects and how much we teach and how fast we go.

3. There is the experience of the events of the course - what actually happens during the course, both inside and outside the class meeting, what we ask the learners to do, what methods we adopt [see Chapter 13 below]. Most of us think in terms of 'teaching methods' - what the teacher does; but with adults especially, the real learning comes about with the activities of the student/learners, what the learners do. They must be active to learn, not just listening to us. We must learn to think more of learning-methods than of teaching-methods.

There is more to the curriculum than this -

* our attitudes towards the learners and towards the subject matter will in turn influence the learners and their attitudes towards each other, to the subject matter and to ourself as teacher.

* there are the methods we or others use to evaluate the course - examinations, tests, comments we may make about the learners' work and so on.

But the three listed above are the most important aspects of the curriculum for us as teachers of adults to think about.

1. *Is the setting of my class an appropriate one for adults or is it more like a school for children?*

   In what ways am I creating the right climate for adult learners or am I treating them like children?

2. *Have I chosen the right amount of material, at the right level for the learners, or have I chosen the amount I think they should learn?*

3. *Am I more concerned with what I am doing as teacher or with what they are doing as learners?*

CHAPTER 12

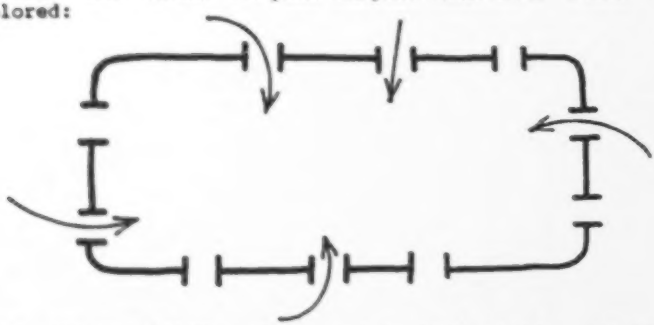
CONTENTS

The subjects we teach are often chosen for us by the organisers of the course (although as teachers we are free to vary some of the material, to adapt it to our adult student/learners and to determine how much we cover in any one class session). But sometimes we are more free than this: we can choose what to teach, at least in terms of some of the subject matter.

Here we must look more closely at what our adult learners want to learn. We all know the importance of choosing topics which are relevant to our adult learners (though we do not always do it); but what we often forget is that what we as teachers may think as relevant to our student/learners is often wrong - just because we do not ask them first. Often the examples we choose to use in our teaching are those we think the learners will be (or perhaps ought to be) interested in. But time and again we are wrong in this. There is a very simple reason for this. We (the teachers) are different from most of our learners; on the whole we were successful, not failures, at school (and often went to college) or at least have had a second chance in life to obtain an education, while most of them were failures at school - if they went there at all! Our standards, our interests are not theirs.

The best way to proceed in this situation is to start our classes, not by talking but by listening. Let the learners say why they have come to the class, what they want to get out of it; let them choose what they want to learn. If the subject is health, allow the student/learners to choose the starting point. If it is literacy, let them, not you, choose the first few words to learn. If it is agriculture or nutrition or mother and child care, let them decide where they wish to begin.

You can think of your subject area as a field to be explored:



There are many different gates into that field, and it does not matter which gate you enter the field by. Once you are inside, you can explore the field. The effective teacher can enter the field by any gate and begin to explore it from there. The gate we need to choose is the gate the student/learners want to enter - that is, the topic they select as the starting point.

There is a second point about this view of teaching adults. We do not need to (indeed, we cannot) explore the whole of the field; we cannot cover all the health or literacy or family planning or agriculture or nutrition or community development or vocational skills or any other subject we are teaching during one short course. We cannot exhaust the topic - there will always be lots more for the learners (and for us) to learn.

This means that we need to try to help our adult learners to continue to learn after the course is over. To do this:

* we must build up their interest - too often our courses kill the interest of the learners by being boring or by trying to go too fast for them; we discourage our student/learners by telling them they are not keeping up. To build up their interest, they need constant success, not failures, and it is our task as teachers to make sure that they get constant success by giving them tasks within their capabilities.

* we must build up their skills of learning on their own - not just their skills relating to the subject matter but how to learn. We need to be as much concerned with <u>how</u> they are learning as with <u>what</u> they are learning, the contents of the course.

We shall discuss this in rather more detail in the next chapter [**Methods**]. But here we should note that although we may feel we need to cover everything in our course, we should only do what our student/learners can master. There is no point in teaching our subject if the learners are not learning!

Look at the list of topics to be covered in your course:

- *tick those items which can be left out if you cannot cover all parts of the course*
- *choose another starting point and see how you can get from there to all other parts of the subject matter*
- *mark those items you think the learners are most interested in; then ask the learners and test your choice*

CHAPTER 13

METHODS

Perhaps the most important thing to remember in teaching adults is that the learners will not learn if they are passive; they must be active, doing something, if they are to learn. Of course, they need to listen and to watch a demonstration, but that is only the start; they must then be active, practising, working and playing, for them to learn properly.

Let us look at this more closely. We all know that our student/learners need to get new knowledge - facts about health or knowledge how to make something, for example. But we tend to assume that they must get that new knowledge from us - and so we talk, we demonstrate.

But there are other methods. They already know a good deal, so they can draw on their own experience. This is one of the reasons we teach in groups, so that each of the members can share their knowledge with the other members. The community they live in knows a good deal, so they can explore for themselves. But even when we, the teachers, are there, the learners can still discover for themselves; they can question us. We do not need to tell them everything; they can find out, even from us.

This is important, because we want them to carry on learning when we have stopped teaching them. So perhaps we should stop 'lecturing at' them and instead help them to question, to discuss and to discover for themselves.

Too often we feel that our adult student/learners cannot do this for themselves - that we must teach them. But if we tell them everything they want to know, we shall make them dependent on us and they will feel that they cannot learn if we are not there. This cannot be good. They need to learn to acquire knowledge and skills by themselves.

So we need to use teaching-learning methods which encourage this sense of independence. There are lots of teaching-learning methods. All of us use just a very few: we forget about the rest. Look at the last three lessons or class sessions you took - how many different methods did you use?

Now in the space below make a list of as many methods as you can think of. If you get less than 20, this is poor; if you get 20-40, this is fine. More than 40 is excellent.

films

chalk and talk

demonstration

discussion

Teaching methods fall into three main groups:

a) **expository** - that is, those concerned with the teacher presenting new material (teacher activity)

b) **exploratory** - that is, those concerned with the learners discovering for themselves or practising new skills (learner activity)

c) **participatory** - that is, those concerned with the learners joining together to share the learning process, sometimes with and sometimes without the teacher (group activity)

Now on the list you have compiled above put the letters
T for teacher activity
L for learner activity
G for group activity
after each method you have written down.

So as teachers of adults, we need to remember that we have a choice of methods; and when making that choice, we need to remember that we are more concerned with what the student/learners will be doing than with what we as teachers will be doing. So we need to plan our lessons and class sessions by asking: what will I ask them to do?

There are a few guidelines about adult learning methods which may be helpful:

* on the whole, avoid asking adults to learn things by heart - their memory is less keen than it was. Rote learning is not for adults: they tend to remember best things that 'make sense'.

* many adults like to imitate, so use demonstrations. But many also like to go beyond this in trial and error - so encourage them not just to copy but to experiment on their own, to adapt the demonstration.

* adults tend to like to see how things relate to each other - so drawing diagrams to point out how A is like B or how C is different from D is often helpful. Don't keep things in separate compartments, but link topic to topic.

* many adults like to try to solve problems, to find answers - and they use their experience to search for similar cases in the past. Encourage them to relate what you are teaching to incidents from their own experience; do not cut these points off as being irrelevant to what <u>you</u> want them to learn.

THERE IS A FULLER DISCUSSION OF APPROPRIATE TEACHING METHODS IN ANOTHER BOOKLET IN THIS SERIES CALLED **TEACHING METHODS IN EXTENSION.**

CHAPTER 14

BLOCKS TO LEARNING

What if our student/learners say that they cannot learn, that they want to learn but can't?

First, there are some things adults cannot learn because they are getting older - some skills which depend on a steady hand or a keen sense of balance or sharp eyesight or nimble fingers or memory etc. But these are not as many as most of us think they are.

Secondly, there are situational factors which may prevent learning - hunger, poor health, tiredness, worry; these need to be removed first before effective learning can take place.

Thirdly, the setting may not be right - the room may be too hot or too cold, too dark or too bright, overcrowded, smoky, poorly equipped or full of distractions. We must try to make the learning environment as good as we can.

Fourthly, the relationships between the learners and the teacher or between some of the learners and other learners may be bad, and that will hinder their learning.

We need to try to remedy all of these hindrances to learning.

But apart from these, there are two main reasons why some persons feel they cannot learn:

1 They have existing knowledge which is different from what we are teaching them and they are emotionally attached to this knowledge. For example, they may have prejudices which they share with others, and they do not wish for many reasons to be separated from those other persons.

In this case, they 'withdraw' from the learning situation. Some may stop coming to our class, others may day-dream. Or they say that they have already learned what we are teaching them but they do not relate it to everyday life, so they fail to use their new knowledge.

What we as teachers need to do in this case is to help these persons to engage in 'unlearning'. This is a long process, but it is essential if we are to help these student/learners to learn. As we have seen, adults bring with them to our classes a wide range of existing knowledge, skills and attitudes, and while some of these are correct and helpful, others are wrong. We cannot simply add new knowledge to what they already possess without disturbing the old; we need to help these learners to re-examine this earlier knowledge, skills and attitudes and to choose better ways if they so wish.

2. There is another range of factors which prevent learning, emotional factors. Some persons believe they cannot learn, they are too old or too slow to learn (they have so often been told that they are educational failures or drop-outs) or that they have no talent in one or another subject area (in art or technical matters, for instance). Some don't want to risk failing in case others laugh at them. Some are too serious to be willing to 'play' (which is a part of learning).

These people set out to defend themselves. They use a large number of techniques like bizarre behaviour, excessive joking, fantasy; or they criticize and blame others; or they find lots of excuses why they can't do the learning and so on.

What is needed here is to change attitudes - towards the teacher, towards the subject or towards themselves. Attitude change is the hardest form of learning to bring about. All we can say about it here is that we shall be more effective if we

* define the attitude to be changed as clearly as possible
* do not challenge the old attitude directly but build on it
* provide new knowledge as the basis for new attitudes; but do not assume that new knowledge on its own is enough to change attitudes
* allow plenty of time for the learners to change their attitudes; it cannot be done quickly
* since attitudes are learned from people, surround the learner with those who share the new attitude: use a learning group
* and encourage the new attitudes to be practised, not just preached; role play is an excellent tool of attitudinal learning.

So, when we find persons in our class or group who won't learn, we need to try to discover the cause. It may call for unlearning; or it may call for the development of new attitudes. In both cases, a learning group will help.

Make a list of those members of your class who say they cannot learn; then put against each name the letter S (if you think the problem is caused by situational factors), K (if you think the block is caused by existing knowledge) or E (if it seems the problem is caused by emotional factors). It will help if you talk over the matter with the learners concerned.

CHAPTER 15

ANXIETY

Many adult student/learners who come to our classes are worried.

There are many reasons for this. Some feel that to come to a learning class reveals that they are lacking in something; it admits a sense of need. Some feel that going back to school denies their adulthood, that they must become like children again. Some feel that they will not be able to cope, that they are getting too old, that they cannot remember or concentrate, that they are bound to fail - after all, they either failed at school or they have never had the basic schooling at all; they are 'educational failures' or 'drop-outs'.

This last is not of course true. They have not failed; it is the educational system and society which has failed because it never gave them a proper opportunity. But it will be hard to convince them of this. They will continue to think that 'education' is for children; they never had it or 'failed' at it, and so now, when they are asked to go to a course, they see themselves as 'going back' to school, back to childhood. No wonder they are anxious.

What can we as teachers do about this? First, we need to realise for ourselves that some anxiety is valuable, indeed necessary, for learning. Unless we are keen to change ourselves, we shall never learn (change). But over-anxiety will prevent learning.

There are two things we can do. First, we can try to help the learners build up positive feelings about themselves - that they can cope. The use of the group and especially sub-groups will help here - it is always useful to break up our class so that the members work together in smaller groups. But much more important is praise and encouragement. The student/learners should never be told that they are wrong in what they do or say, but encouraged to try out new ways of thinking, to experiment with new ways of doing and to evaluate older practices against the new. Criticism and signs of disapproval will only increase anxiety, not ease it.

Secondly, we need to build up a sense of success. We can devise small, short-term tasks which these learners can do successfully, and they will then of their own accord want to proceed to the next task. They will grow in confidence; they will develop a feeling of achievement.

And the only way we can help the learner to build up confidence is for us as teachers to have confidence in the learners. If we believe that our student/learners can do the tasks we set, then in time they too - even the anxious ones - will come to believe it. It takes time, but it can be done.

Are any of my student/learners anxious?

Why are they anxious?

Do I criticize them or encourage them?

CHAPTER 16

ARE WE DOING A GOOD JOB?

How do we know that we are being successful?

The first thing to do is to determine just what it is that we are doing.

If we think our task is to teach, then we shall want to test ourselves, whether we are doing a good job.

If we think the purpose of the course is for the student/learners to learn something, then we shall want to test them, whether they have learned, what they have learned, and how well they have learned it.

What shall we look for?

1. First, since the course for adults should be designed to meet their intentions, we ought to look to see if they are satisfied:

   a) by their attendance and attention

   b) by their comments or other signs of satisfaction and pleasure

   c) by whether they continue to learn when the course is over

2. We can look at our teaching - how much time do we spend talking and how much time do the learners spend in being active?
   - how much interaction (questions etc) is there between teacher and learner?
   - do we use exploratory and participatory methods in the class or only expository [see Chapter 13 above]?

3. We can look at the **context** of the class - is the setting right for an adult class, and is the climate one in which the learners can feel free to join in [see Chapter 11 above]?

- is our class an 'adult' one or one more appropriate to school children?

4. We can look at the **activities of the learners** - at the group and the interactions of the members, the work they do in class and out of class, their interest and curiosity, their involvement in the work of the class.

5. We can look at the **'end product'** - what the learners can do at the end of the course. This will not of course test their achievements - some adult learners start from a long way back but they make more progress (although in the end they may fail to achieve the standards set by the teacher) than others who are more advanced when they join the class and who 'pass' easily. We ought to try to find ways of recognising effort and progress as well as attainment.

Most of us only use the last of these methods to evaluate our work. But we need to be clear that our real goal is not to produce a piece of work or a person who knows it all, but to produce a 'learner', someone who will carry on learning when the course is over. And those with the top marks do not always make the best learners.

Evaluate your own course in terms of:

1. What are the objectives?

Have you achieved them?

2. Are the student/learners satisfied?

How do you know?

3. In your teaching, do you:
talk all the time?
encourage the student/learners to be active?

4 Is the room and seating right for adults?

5. Is the 'climate' of the class an adult one?

6. What are the student/learners doing?

7 How many of them have made progress?

Who have made the most progress?

8. How many can successfully complete the task you set out to do?

CHAPTER 17

JOINING IN

We now know that for adults to learn anything, they must be active, not passive. And they need to be active if they are to continue to learn for the rest of their lives, not come to a stop once our class stops. We want our adult student/learners to become free, not dependent on us or on other teachers; they must take control of their own lives.

But the problem is that we the teachers almost always do too much for our student/learners:

* we choose the subject matter of the course (health or nutrition or literacy or community development or agriculture or income-generating programmes or women's programmes and so on) and the objectives
* we choose the contents - the detailed list of topics to be covered
* we choose the time and place to study and the length of the course
* we choose the methods - what we will do and what they will do - and the resources to be used in the course
* we choose when and how to evaluate the course

Now, there is no reason why we should do all of this. Our student/learners are adults: they are capable of sharing with us in all of these tasks.

* they can choose what they want to learn
* they can choose the objectives
* they can help choose the topics
* they can (and should) choose the time, place and duration of the course
* they can share in choosing the methods and help to find the resources for the programme
* they can (and should) evaluate what progress they are making

But participation can go further than this in a number of ways:

First, adult student/learners can share in the teaching. They know a great deal, and they can share what they know. They can teach each other. And they can teach the teacher. Indeed, teaching is the best way to learn!

This is what is called "teaching on equal terms" or "two-way learning". We as teachers have much to learn from our adult student/learners and we should take this opportunity. We do not possess all knowledge, just as they do not possess only ignorance. Our real relationship is one of sharing - even in literacy classes and nutrition classes and so on.

Secondly, adult student/learners can create new knowledge. This has been shown time and again. Adult classes have conducted surveys, enquiries, explorations (all of which are forms of research) and found out new things that no-one else has known. Local studies and local history are two of the most usual forms of such adult study groups - looking at the local community as it is today and as it was once in the past; but there are other fields of self study such as traditional medicine.

Too often we underestimate our own student/learners, especially the illiterate ones. No-one needs to learn literacy before they can begin to learn other subjects like health or agriculture or family planning - though they will learn all of these better and quicker if they are literate.

We are beginning to see the relationship between the teacher of adults and the learner in a different way now. Instead of saying "I know what you should learn", the teacher now says "What do you want to learn?" Instead of the teacher 'imparting' knowledge, the teacher now says "I'll help you to learn". Instead of saying "I'll tell you", the teacher is saying "I'll help you to find out".

Above all we are beginning to see that what our student/learners know is just as important as what we know. On the whole, we know 'book-knowledge'. We do not and never can know what it feels like to be an uneducated villager or an adult illiterate or an urban slum dweller, any more than these people can know what it feels like to be a development officer or extension worker or college student. We can't 'inform' them - or at least we cannot do this unless they too 'inform' us. We, the teachers, need to listen as much as we talk.

Have I ever asked my student/learners to help me

- *choose the subject? yes/no*
- *choose the objectives? yes/no*
- *choose the topics to be studied? yes/no*
- *choose the time, place and length of course? yes/no*
- *choose the methods? yes/no*
- *find the resources? yes/no*
- *evaluate the course? yes/no*

IF YOU WISH TO READ MORE ABOUT WHAT IT MEANS TO TEACH ADULTS, YOU MAY CARE TO READ:

TEACHING ADULTS by ALAN ROGERS (Open University Press, Milton Keynes, U.K., 1986)

TEACHING ADULTS IN EXTENSION

This is one of a series of booklets prepared specially for extension workers and others engaged in development programmes who find themselves teaching adults; but it will be of interest also to others who are involved in the education and training of adults at a practical level. It takes the reader simply through the stages of planning to teach - from the first coming together with the learners to deciding what and how to teach and to the final stages of deciding whether we are being successful in our teaching. It is essential reading for all those who wish to be effective in their programmes.

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